

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 3-5 and 18, and add new claim 19, as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A valve shield comprising a shaped sheet of material adapted to be affixed to the annulus of a valve, said shaped sheet having a given surface area configured to match at least a portion of at least one leaflet of the valve, and said shaped sheet of material adapted to contact ~~extend over~~ the at least a portion of the at least one leaflet of the valve so as to assist or replace the closing function of that valve leaflet.

2. (Original) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to prevent leaflet prolapse.

3. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein said given surface area of said shaped ~~the~~ sheet of material is crescent shaped.

4. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 3 wherein the portion of the sheet of material contacting the ~~extending over~~ at least a portion of the at least one leaflet includes at least one opening therein.

5. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 3 wherein the portion of the sheet of material contacting ~~extending over~~ at least a portion of the at least one leaflet is substantially solid.

6. (Original) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to be fastened to the annulus of the valve with sutures.

7. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 6 wherein the sheet of material includes preformed holes for receiving the suture.

8. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to be fastened to the annulus of the valve with staples.

9. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 8 wherein the sheet of material includes staples formed integral therewith.

10. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises biological material.

11. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises pericardium.

12. (Original) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises non-biological material.

13. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the material is round and includes at least one opening therein.

14. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the shaped sheet of material comprises a wire frame.

15. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the shaped sheet of material comprises a crescent shape with a mid-line projection adapted to support a second leaflet against prolapse.

16. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to extend over at least two leaflets.

17. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 16 wherein the sheet of material includes at least one opening therein.

18. (Amended) A method for reducing regurgitation in a valve having a plurality of leaflets, said method comprising:

providing a valve shield comprising a shaped sheet of material having a given surface area configured to match at least a portion of at least one leaflet of the valve, and said shaped sheet of material adapted to contact the at least a portion of the at least one leaflet of the valve; and

affixing the valve shield to the annulus of the valve so that it ~~extends over~~ contacts the at least a portion of at least one leaflet of the valve so as to assist or replace the closing function of that valve leaflet.

19. A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein said shaped sheet of material has a given outer periphery, and a given length of the given outer periphery is shaped to correspond to at least a section of the annulus of the valve.